

Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group

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May 17, 2011

Called to order at 10:05 am on Tuesday, at ADF&G Bethel office and adjourned at 11:36 a.m. Five of thirteen members were present; no quorum was established; a Working Group session was held.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Continuing Business- N/A

Old Business:

- 1) Update on implementation of a system for reporting salmon shipped from Bethel
- 2) Date and Time of KYUK talk show discussing Chinook Conservation
- 3) Update on CVS funding for mesh sharing project
- 4) ADF&G staff report on mesh size effects on Chinook in Kuskokwim
- 5) Review proposed actions for Chinook Conservation

New Business:

- 1) Discuss 'talking points' for Chinook conservation
- 2) Discuss participation of lower river communities in Working Group

WORKING GROUP ACTION ITEMS:

- 1) Finished Chinook conservation posters will be sent to WG distribution
- 2) Bev Hoffman will contact newspapers about submitting posters
- 3) Alissa Joseph will pursue poster printing/funding with Calista and/or CVRF.
- 4) Greg Roczicka will draft letter with co-chairs (by first of June) to communities affected by proposed management actions.
- 5) Chuck Brazil will follow up with CVS about mesh sharing project funds

WORKING GROUP MOTIONS: none

MEETING ACTION ANNOUNCEMENT:

The next meeting will be on **Monday, June 13, at 10:00 a.m.** at ADF&G in Bethel. Main focus will be to discuss the salmon runs and inseason management.

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD: none

AGENDA ITEMS:

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1) Update on implementation of a system for reporting salmon shipped from Bethel:

Dan Gillikin (USFWS) had no new update because Gene Peltola (USFWS) is still awaiting details from OSM. One of the discussion points being clarified with OSM is where the authority level lies for creating reporting requirements for shipping fish out of Bethel. Bev Hoffman (Sport Fishing member) said she got a call from someone saying that in the 1970's Kuskokwim River Chinook were not allowed to be shipped out, she asked if there's any knowledge of that being true? No one had a response, but Doug Molyneaux suggested looking in ADF&G Annual Management reports around the time when Dee Dee Jonrowe was in charge to see if there's mention of that.

2) Date and Time of KYUK talk show discussing Chinook Conservation:

Chuck Brazil, Bev Hoffman, and Gene Peltola will be on a live talk show 2 pm, May 19th on KYUK radio (640 AM). The show can also be streamed online at www.KYUK.org. The telephone number to call in is: 1 (800) 995-8954, or locally in Bethel: 543-5985 or 543-2756

3) Update on CVS funding for mesh sharing project: N/A no processors were present

4) ADF&G staff report on mesh size effects on Chinook in Kuskokwim:

No formal staff report was given but Kevin Schaberg (ADFG Kuskokwim Area research biologist replacing Doug Molyneaux who retired), said that we have limited data on this issue, but BTF data which uses two different mesh sizes (5 3/8" and 8") indicates that using the smaller mesh catches more fish than 8" mesh, but smaller fish, but that's all the data we have.

Bev Hoffman wanted ADF&G opinion on whether we should urge people to fish with smaller mesh. Chuck Brazil responded that the commercial fishery is restricted to 6" mesh or less, and that primarily, smaller kings are caught in that fishery and that it is likely that 8" mesh catches larger fish. From this standpoint you catch larger fish in 8" gear, but in 6" you'll catch larger fish as well, but you'll catch more of the smaller fish. Bev pointed out that she'd received a letter from Napaimute resident Mark Leary in response to the need to conserve Chinook salmon, he'd made a personal choice to use 6" inch mesh when fishing for Chinook to reduce harvest of big females.

Holly Carroll (ADF&G Kuskokwim River Assistant Manager) clarified that on the Kuskokwim, data is more limited than it is on the Yukon, i.e. we have incomplete data sets (i.e. data has not been collected every year) and also data we have is for 6" and smaller mesh, or for what is caught in the 8" in BTF. That is not enough data to take a specific position on whether for example, a 7" or any other specific mesh size would be better for catching less Chinook, because we simply don't have data to show that; data gaps exist. Chuck Brazil said ADF&G would hold staff meetings to address these data gaps after the busy fishing season.

Doug Molyneaux clarified that escapement goals are only based on numbers of fish, not on size of fish. So if folks shifted to small mesh gear, they could catch higher numbers of salmon, so if everyone switched to smaller mesh, we might see a decrease in numbers of

Chinook returning to spawning grounds, though more of the bigger females might make it up there. He further clarified that in the Yukon mesh size selectivity study report they suggested restricting mesh sizes to 7.5" and smaller. However, those Yukon River results can't be exactly applied on the Kuskokwim because size and age classes of Chinook on the Yukon are not exactly the same as the Kuskokwim, so the exact mesh size that is ideal, should be determined specifically by a mesh size selectivity project on the Kuskokwim. In regards to the Yukon study, Dan Gillikin noted that there was not a change in CPUE when going to smaller mesh size, and felt this was a confusing point (from that report) that may or may not apply to Kuskokwim.

Eva Patton (ONC) reminded the group that ONC had submitted a proposal for a mesh selectivity study to OSM which wasn't ultimately funded, but it was determined more data was needed before encouraging people to make the shift to smaller mesh. She pointed out that fishermen surveyed during inseason harvest monitoring surveys said they were catching more fish with smaller mesh sizes.

Kevin Schaberg explained that subsistence fishermen want a desired volume of fish each year, so with 6" mesh (if they catch smaller fish) they may need more fish to meet their goals. Eva agreed and said that inseason feedback was that fishermen were getting smaller kings, so switched to smaller gear to catch more fish, catching a greater total number of fish to make up for smaller size.

Also, the mesh size used can affect the chum to Chinook ratios in the harvest. Doug Molyneaux, to give some historical perspective, said that using 5 3/8" and 6.5" mesh in BTF in 80's they found that chum, which are larger early in season, were caught more frequently in 6.5" mesh but then by July, the 6.5" mesh was catching more Chinook. So this illustrates how what is caught in different meshes can change temporally (over time), but he also speculated that if people use smaller mesh and catch more chums, they can use those chums to offset how many total Chinook they might harvest.

5) Review proposed actions for Chinook Conservation:

Chuck Brazil reminded the group that the Tuluksak, Kwethluk, and Kisaralik Rivers and Kuskokuak slough would be limited to 4" and smaller mesh gillnets, and that rod and reel subsistence fishing for Chinook as well as sport-fishing for Chinook would also be closed in those areas. He reminded the group that the Working Group motion to restrict fishing to federally qualified users was not supported by ADFG or USFWS. Greg Roczicka also reminded the group that though it was not currently on the table for discussion, they might be looking at windows restrictions for mainstem later in the season. Bev Hoffman asked if there will be enforcement for the rod and reel restrictions (on the tributaries) and Dan Gillikin responded that USFWS research staff working in the area will remind fishermen about the closures, and can report any violation to law enforcement officers, and once regulations are in place there will be enforcement from ADF&G and USFWS. Dan Gillikin will also be contacting all guides, transporters, outfitters in area to notify them on any actions. Chuck Brazil would like to get these action notifications out to the public by May 24th. They will be released as Emergency Orders and News Releases, and sent to local press.

Lamont Albertson (Sport Fishing Member) pointed out there's hotspots in Aniak where sport-fishing guides will be targeting kings, .e.g. in front of Aniak where Kuskokwim and Aniak rivers meet and felt that as Working Group members, we may have more influence to directly appeal to the guides to not target king salmon which will be important so that Aniak subsistence fishers don't see sport fishers targeting those kings. John Chythlook (ADF&G SF) stated that he has made efforts to call or contact guides in Aniak, of course they can proceed with their business as they normally would, but they should realize this is a poor king year and should modify their operations accordingly. He did not have an indication of how they'll proceed with that.

It was pointed out that the proposed actions for Chinook conservation will not include restrictions on harvest of Chinook in Aniak. Bev Hoffman asked why Aniak wasn't included in the originally recommended conservation actions, and Kevin Schaberg said that ADF&G didn't have indications that there was a need to conserve Chinook in the Aniak River specifically, and that because the focus was on how to conserve the most Chinook, actions are being taken in the lower river. He stressed that the Aniak issue is important, but tributary escapements in the lower river area were the main concern (because escapement goals hadn't been made on the Kwethluk and Tuluksak for multiple years).

NEW BUSINESS:

1) Discuss 'talking points' for Chinook conservation:

A subcommittee met to brainstorm simple talking points to use when delivering the message about conserving Chinook this season, either for use in posters, or in direct conversations. Alissa Joseph (ADF&G) passed posters around table for members present in Bethel to view. The main points addressed in the posters are: The projected 2011 Chinook outlook is low, there is a need for conservation of Chinook, it's important to preserve the traditional way of life, and we need to think long-term sustainability. The Bethel high school art club will be helping to produce posters to go out to public.

Greg Roczicka reminded the group that an important talking point to remember is that the Kuskokwim Area is the least regulated subsistence fishery in the state, and we want to keep it that way by being proactive.

Dan Gillikin suggested putting the size of subsistence harvest in context for people because they are often surprised by it, e.g. 85,000 Chinook harvested annually, which is very large in comparison to the harvest of Chinook in commercial and sport fisheries combined.

2) Discuss participation of lower river communities in Working Group:

Bev Hoffman expressed concern about adding more members to the Working Group, to see if there'd be more participation and wondered if the Traditional councils know that they can attend meetings. She feels the representation is missing key communities. Greg Roczicka would like to see a specific request for action (as an action item on Tribal Council (TC) meeting agendas) to

appoint the Tribal Administrators to sit-in on meetings, even as just participators. Lamont Albertson agreed that as long as it didn't make the Working Group too big, it would be good to have the TCs appoint members to serve with them. Holly Carroll commented about participation in general, that it seems current Working Group member alternates rarely come, and perhaps specific work should be done to encourage increased involvement with existing members. Lamont Albertson suggested having Working Group meetings in other communities, e.g. Kwethluk, which might stimulate varied discussion during Working Group.

GENERAL COMMENTS FROM WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

Angie Morgan (Middle River Subsistence) said the ice jam in Aniak broke up so there was no flooding in that community.

Bev Hoffman reminded the group that AVCP has an account set up at a local bank for donations to help residents in Crooked Creek who were flooded out recently.

WORKING GROUP ATTENDANCE

MEMBER	NAME	OTHER
Upriver Elder	VACANT	Alissa Joseph, ADF&G Board Support & ONC
Downriver Elder	absent	Holly Carroll, ADF&G
Commercial Fisher	absent	Kevin Schaberg, ADF&G
Lower River Subsistence	Greg Roczicka	Dan Gillikin, USFWS
Middle River Subsistence	Angie Morgan	Casie Stockdale, AVCP
Upper River Subsistence	absent	Becca Robbins-Gisclair, YRDFA
Headwaters Subsistence	absent	Carl Berger, Lower River Economic Council
Processor	absent	Travis Elison, ADF&G
Member at Large	absent	Steve Miller, USFWS
Sport Fisher	Beverly Hoffman	Lamont Albertson (Sport Fisher member)
Western Interior RAC	absent	Doug Molyneaux
Y-K Delta RAC	absent	Ben Balivet, ADF&G Subsistence
ADF&G	Chuck Brazil	Tom Taube, ADF&G Sport Fish
Chair	Greg Roczicka	John Chythlook, ADF&G Sport Fish
		Eva Patton, ONC
		Ken Harper, USFWS
		Shane Iverson, KYUK

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS:

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (**ADF&G**), Orutsararmiut Native Council (**ONC**), Kuskokwim Native Association (**KNA**), Association of Village Council Presidents (**AVCP**), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (**USFWS**), Bethel Test Fishery project (**BTF**), Catch Per Unit Effort (**CPUE**), Coastal Village Seafoods (**CVS**), ADF&G Commercial Fisheries Division (**CF**), ADF&G Sport Fisheries Division (**SF**), Regional Advisory Council (**RAC**), Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group (**KRSMWG** or **Working Group, WG**), Sustainable Escapement Goal (**SEG**), Biological Escapement Goal (**BEG**).